

MIDDAY EXPRESS

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First meeting of New European Consumer Consultative Group

Consumer advocates from around the enlarged European Union are in Brussels today for the first meeting of the European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG). The ECCG was created by the Commission in October this year to be its main forum for engaging with the consumer movement. The Group will hold regular exchanges of views with the Commission on EU policies that impact on consumers and, from time to time, produce written opinions on issues that it, or the Commission, regard as having special importance. The ECCG's predecessor, the Consumer Committee, produced opinions on subjects ranging from the introduction of the Euro to commercial practices aimed at children. (For further details of these see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_org/associations/committ/opinions/opinions_en.htm). The group is composed of one representative from national consumer organisations from each of the 15 Member States of the EU, plus three representatives from European level consumer organisations. Observers from the new Member States take part in the work of the ECCG and will become full members after 1 May 2004. The members who meet in Brussels today have a mandate until the autumn of 2006. Over the next three years the ECCG will be a vital sounding board for the Commission as it faces up to the challenges of making EU enlargement work for consumers, contributing to the proper functioning of the EU's Internal Market and increasing consumer confidence. A recent opinion poll showed many Europeans still lack confidence in the consumer protection on offer in other EU Member States (see IP/03/1632). Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne said: "Consumer organisations play an essential role, both in ensuring enlargement works for consumers and in enabling the EU to develop a common high standard of consumer protection. Engaging effectively with the consumer movement is therefore a top priority for the Commission." For a full list of members of the ECCG see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_org/associations/committ/list_members/members_en.pdf

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